



Reframing the Stories of our Lives

Article 3, May 4th 2021

No one likes to fail. Failure is a word we tend to avoid. Extraordinary would be the life, however, where it did not feature even in small ways.

From very young, we become familiar with that uncomfortable feeling we call shame, when we don't feel good about ourselves. A little later as we become capable of empathy, we can feel guilt about something we've done but don't approve of, often because it hurts someone else. Sometimes shame and guilt arrive together.

Do you ever find yourself returning to memories of long-gone failures, traumas, mistakes or problems with little compassion for yourself? Some of these may require ongoing in-depth healing for the damage caused to you through no fault of your own. Although past events cannot be changed now, it is never too soon or too late to "reframe" or recontextualise the stories of your life. Reframing gives us a fresh outlook, a new frame of reference through which to view our experiences – the positive and negative.

One of my favourite examples of reframing comes from the Japanese poet, Mizuta Masahide: "Barn's burnt down, now I can see the moon." Leonard Cohen in "Anthem" reminds us, "There is a crack, a crack in everything; that's how the light gets in." Lucas Land in "Ode to Compost" writes of "lifeless leftovers lingering piled together in an organic grave" where eventually, through decomposition, "this civilisation of death and decay brings life." Simple images that shift perspective to one of mature, wry hope-filled humour.

Each day gives us a longer view of life with increasingly more weeds and dead organic matter piling up for transformation. As living beings, we know that life cycles and recycles. We are an integral part of the entire creation 'groaning in one great act of giving birth' (Rom 8:2). What stands in the way of newness, Walter Brueggemann tells us in "Prophetic Imagination", are the "twin habits of denial that refuses to groan in acknowledgment of a failed creation and despair that groans but entertains no prospect of newness after the groan." Reframing helps us 'groan hopefully.'

An Exercise in Consciousness

- *Choose a story of failure or disappointment in your life. Find the hidden blessings. How does/has this increase/d your understanding of your purpose and meaning?*

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